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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.3
NLS 03-11-17

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Control: 9629
Rec'd: September 16, 1957
1.57 a.m.

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FROM: Guatemala City

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 99. September 15, 6 p.m.

DECLASSIFICATION DATE 6/4/75
PER Embassy, OFFICE ARA
FADRC FOI CASE NO. 5-B-201

PRIORITY

I developed conversation Saturday with Minister Defense along lines Deptel 157, expressing deep concern over accumulation information indicating possible early installation military junta or extreme rightist regime. I also alluded to Dominican activities this area.

Minister outlined in detail many steps he has taken in visits to all military establishments and changes in key personnel to insure loyalty and backing of armed forces. He said "I believe I control armed forces and barring some unforeseen development I do not anticipate formation military junta".

Minister recalled and reiterated his intention for low constitutional procedures. He analyzed political situation indicating Ortiz is making satisfactory progress. His references to Ydigoras were disparaging and he anticipates no serious competition from that quarter. However, he was concerned over the left and said Partido Revolucionario application now being studied with view denying it registration next week since it is infiltrated with Communists.

Fearing Ydigoras plans next week make serious charge of impartiality Minister volunteered Ydigoras has photostat of receipt from former Minister Government Rodriguez of 60,000 Quetzales from confidential funds for Ortiz campaign expenses. Minister said Rodriguez was clumsy fool and responsibility will be placed squarely upon him.

Minister exuded confidence in ability himself his brother Enrique and his cousin Minister Government handle situation. I inquired if Enrique was in complete accord and Minister replied affirmatively.

I again

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-2-(2), September 15, 6 p.m., from Guatemala City.

I again mentioned reported Dominican activities in Guatemala singling out presence of Abbes. Minister volunteered Abbes called on him and gave assurance Trujillo only interest in Guatemala is strong anti-Commie Government. I was unable draw out or determine whether Minister had knowledge of Enrique reported involvement with Dominicans.

Report reaching Embassy indicate Ydigoras may have substantial backing in many quarters. This is due in great part to seeming general intense dislike of MDN. Disclosure of impartiality and newspaper advice to public employees to profess support of Ortiz but vote secretly according to conscience may be expected to diminish vote for Ortiz among educated classes but not appreciably. Partido Revolucionario will not acquiese in rejection of its registration but Minister Defense is determined to take whatever action situation requires.

SPARKS

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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714.00/9-1857

SEP 24 1957

FROM : Embassy

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

REF :

DISP. NO. 178

DATE

CLASS. 5

RM/R-2 REP-2 EUR-5 IO-4 4/0-1.0

CIA-12 USIA-10 OCB-1

SUBJECT: Presidential Candidate Miguel Ortiz Arzelli

During the earlier days of the electoral period, the Embassy Press Attaché obtained the impression that it was the consensus among Guatemalan newspapermen that the GOG was not seriously sponsoring Administration candidate Miguel Ortiz Arzelli; that he would be replaced as Administration candidate by someone else, or that a coup d'état would intervene before elections. At a meeting of the Association of Guatemalan Newspapermen on September 14, the Press Attaché noted a changed attitude. He found that the journalists now believe that elections will take place as scheduled and that Ortiz will be duly elected, in spite of the fact that he is a lack-lustre candidate, because of the backing he enjoys from the Administration. The newsmen think, however, that the period immediately following the elections will be unsettled.

A growing fund of statements on the political, social and economic problems of the country by Ortiz commit him to follow closely the middle-of-the-road philosophy of the late President Castillo Armas.

In Retalhuleu on September 13 he stated: "I shall give maximum attention to industry and agriculture . . . I shall undertake a great literacy and popular education campaign, paying particular attention to hygienic and sanitary conditions, and including the natives of the country by means of the rural socio-educational program. I shall fight to end the exploitation of man by man. I shall encourage credit cooperatives and I shall encourage producers' and consumers' cooperatives. I propose to move forward with the policies of Colonel Castillo Armas, distributing land in fee simple to the campesinos . . . . I shall make relentless war on Communism."

In El Quiché on September 12 he said: "Guatemala desires political turmoil no longer, wants no more disturbances. I assure you that our land will be tranquil, because we shall resolve its problems . . .

"Schools must not only teach reading and writing. They must also work toward improving our children's lot . . . 125

"We have the obligation to see that our children are adapted to

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RJMayleiner
REPORTER

AUTHENTICATING OFFICER

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their social surroundings from a tender age, in order that they may know what are their rights and liberties and be able to exercise them as adults . . . .

"We shall sin against our country if we do not educate its workers. . .

"I promise to develop the Zona Reina, that special area of the Republic, a well-spring of productiveness and riches, by constructing roads which will permit the egress of its products and communication among its towns. . . ."

(Zona Reina is the fertile, undeveloped area of northern El Quiché, extending into Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz).

"The economic development of a society is the cornerstone of genuine progress . . .

"It is necessary that economic activity spread to all parts of our country and to all its social classes, to complete and integrate our national picture. . ."

On the same occasion he took note of rumors that the elections would not take place. He stated that he was sure the Army and the Government of Guatemala would guarantee free elections. He said he would be partial to no area, that he would visit the cities, towns and villages in order to know their problems. He promised El Quiché experiment stations, roads, sewers, paving, homes for the aged, hospitals, schools and technical assistance for the campesino. He promised to give his complete support to the encouragement of small business and to the industrialization of the country, in order to achieve an integrated economy on a broad base. He said, "Our goal is not only to teach the campesino to read and write, but to open to him the doors of culture and learning, as well as the doors of his personal, economic, material and spiritual betterment."

In Huehuetenango on September 11 Ortiz said, "I shall govern democratically in resolving the problems of the people . . .I shall guarantee the right of labor to organize. . . .I shall make relentless war on Communism."

On the same occasion he stated that his principal goal as President would be to provide more and better food and nourishment for the people. He stated he would establish a just wage scale for workers and campesinos, carry out a program of social benefits which would include coverage for old age and unemployment. He proposed to industrialize the country, counting on the help of private initiative. He promised to continue Castillo's housing program. He promised the opening of El Tapón, which is the stretch of the Inter-American Highway in Huehuetenango still to be completed.

[redacted]

Referring to politics, he said that Guatemala had had enough of dictatorships, whether of the left or of the right. He said he was ready to oppose either kind.

Ortiz has said repeatedly that he wants the people to trust him and to have no fear in approaching him with their problems and he has promised to resolve the country's problems as they arise.

Lacking any serious issue with his principal opponent, Gen. Ydígoras, he has attacked the leftist Partido Revolucionario, which possibly will be unable to obtain legal registration and has not yet nominated a candidate.

But first and last, his platform continues to be Castillo Armas. From the moment he announced his candidacy, there has been no question as to Ortiz' dedication to every aspect of the program of the late President. He began his campaign with a declaration of loyalty to Castillo and this has continued to be one of the principal planks of his platform.

It will be seen from the foregoing that Ortiz has made a large number of broad promises but, as with General Ydígoras (Embdesp 198, Sept. 13), he has made little or no attempt to spell out how he expects to accomplish this ambitious program. His speeches, like those of Ydígoras, are frequently so general as to have little practical meaning.

It is difficult to estimate the effect of his campaign on the electorate to date. Ortiz is not a particularly prepossessing person physically and, although he was President of the Supreme Court, he entered the campaign relatively unknown. His heavy reliance on the memory of Castillo has probably hindered him from building up his own personality with the public as rapidly as some had hoped.

Whatever his personal impact on the voters may have been to date, there is little reason to question that the weight of the Government's financial and organizational backing will be sufficient to bring him victory.

It should be noted in passing, however, that the Government's financial and organizational support is not an unmixed blessing. At an Ydígoras rally on September 16 the loudest applause greeted the reported remark of a campesino to the effect that the MDN had paid him one quetzal to attend an Ortiz rally, but that he was glad to pay 50 cents out of his own pocket to attend an Ydígoras meeting. Speakers repeatedly jeered the MDN practice of paying or giving hoes or machetes to campesinos who attend Ortiz rallies. Gen. Ydígoras intends to publicize the photostat in his possession which shows the contribution to Ortiz campaign coffers of some Q.60,000 in Government confidential funds. The opposition has denounced as a political

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[redacted] ture the recently announced pay raise for workers on Government [redacted]. A pro-Ortiz officer of the Partido de Trabajadores Demo- [redacted] has told the Embassy that he considers the presence of [redacted] ministers at Ortiz rallies to be stupid, smacking as it does of intimidación.

The fact remains, despite the Government's open and frequently inept backing, that this backing is a net asset on election day. The pay raise for the finca workers will allegedly benefit 130,000 workers during a part of the year. In an election in which probably no more than 450,000 votes will be cast, this huge national farm "bloc" is immensely important.

In addition to every other advantage, Ortiz' picture will probably appear three times on the ballot (four times, if the Partido Liberal split does not cause the Electoral Board to withdraw its registration), compared to once each for Ydígoras and Asturias Quiñonez.

Ortiz is campaigning diligently and persistently to build up popularity and prestige. He still has a month to go before elections. It would be too much to expect that a man who was almost a political unknown outside of Guatemala City until three weeks ago should already have developed a great popular following. But he has at least made progress already in making the public aware of who he is and what he stands for. As time goes on he should be able gradually to transform this awareness into a reasonable degree of personal popularity.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR:

BJ Ruyle

Ben J. Ruyle
Second Secretary

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